

## Bernard Flynn, Scooterist

By FRANK H. SWEET

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back. Is there a wreck, do ye think?" "Yes, an' gone down. The gun stopped an hour ago." "How many of ye went out? Has any one got back yet? Do ye know if there be any survivors? Are you two waitin' here to help the others when they come in?" Bernard asked the questions sharply, swiftly, incisively, his gaze flashing up and down the coast as he spoke. A dozen yards down the vague outlines of several figures could be seen. From somewhere above, with the wind, came the slow, irregular pacing of footsteps, as of persons stopping every few feet



"TWO OF YE GET IN HERE," HE SHOUTED, to gaze out to sea. Now and then from the darkness, borne on the wind, came anxious bits of speculation or inquiry. Into Bernard's face flashed startled intelligence, and he whirled to the two men.

"Do you mean that nobody's gone to help?" he demanded.

"There's nothin' but death out there for helpers," was the quick answer. "No man would risk life quicker than we, but it's foolish to throw it away. Good Lord, man! What are you doin'?" for Bernard had swung his scooter back to the shore ice with a quick, almost vicious thrust and was hoisting the sail.

"Where'd the distress signals seem?" he demanded as he caught the rope with a swift double hitch about a cleat and grasped the scooter grip to push off. "Runnin' out there with nothin' to go by would be like huntin' a white fish in a school of herrin'. Could ye guess by the sound?"

"She struck somewhere in the east shore rapids, an' if anybody had time to get off they must 'a' drifted down toward the long rocks. The water 'd be more open there than here. But don't ye try it, Barney," warningly. "It's sure death, an' there's that house, an' Norah goin' to be here in a few days. Think o' her, man."

"I do," sharply. "Norah 'd be the first one to say for me to go. If she was wrecked off somewhere to sea wouldn't I want any man in reach to risk his life to save her—even to lose it if there was need? The people out yonder have somebody waitin' for 'em."

"Mebbe there ain't any," shouted one of the men as the scooter slipped away into the darkness.

"Mebbe there is," came back grimly. "I'm goin' to see."

Twenty yards from shore the scooter dropped into open water, then plowed its way across a broad space of broken ice and slush, after which, with the aid of a few vigorous prods of the iron pointed scooter pole, its pumpkin seed shaped hull rose gracefully upon another ice field and sped on with scarcely any checking of its speed. In the water its shallow bottom skimmed the surface like a bird, the great width alone keeping it from capsizing. On the ice the tiny runners made it a sled, or, rather, an ice yacht, which under favorable circumstances the broad sail swept on at almost terrific speed.

But going out Bernard had to tack against the wind, which made progress slow and tempted him to many risks for the sake of speed. Once, while crossing an open space, a swirling blast lifted his boat clear and threw him into the water, but his hand was gripped upon the rope with fingers of steel, and, though he was dragged through the water and across twenty yards of ice beyond, he held on and finally drew himself on board and righted the scooter without stopping, but his hand was torn and his body bruised, and before he had gone another hundred yards his wet clothing had frozen into an almost inflexible armor.

In the darkness, with the wind and the rain in his face, it was impossible to hit the right point even over a familiar course, and, though the long rocks were scarcely a mile from shore, it was an hour before his scooter dropped into the head of the rapids a half mile above them.

He did not hesitate, for time was of more value than safety. Down the boiling current his craft tossed and dipped at race horse speed and then slid out upon the rough broken ice near the long rocks. But he tacked

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A SQUAT DUCKLIKE CRAFT SLID UP FROM THE ICE.

panion, but still keeping his head bent toward the storm for unusual sounds. "If they's any saved they've drifted down by the long rocks somewhere an' will freeze stiff in this wind 'fore help can get out to 'em. My best hope is that none was saved. They'd be better off."

"Yes, a good sight," agreed the companion; "but we don't know. Maybe they's some out there now waitin' for help. Lord," savagely, "if 'twa'n't sure death I'd a sight rather be scooterin' out into that blackness than standin' here thinkin' of 'em an' doin' nothin'. Hello!"

A queer slipping and grinding sound had rushed toward them from the darkness, and now a squat, ducklike craft with sails full spread slid up from the ice and a man sprang out beside them.

"Barney Flynn!" cried one of them amazedly. "Where'd you come from?" "The Long Island shore," coolly. "I thought ye might be needin' me over here. Didn't I hear a ship's gun awbles back?"

"But how'd get there?" incredulously and ignoring the question. "I seen ye at the lower station 'bout dark, an' no one man craft could cross the Great South Bay in this storm."

Barney laughed.

"Bedad, an' I scooted across it after ye left," he said. "I wanted to have another look at me house. Norah 'll be arrivin' inside the week an' I want everything tidied up whiles."

"Gora mighty!" sharply. "Ain't ye no sense o' death, man, an' you to be married in a week?"

"I wrote Norah everything would be ready an' neat," defensively. "I went across to get me kindlin' cut an' see there was no dampness to the house anywhere. Tomorrow or the next day I'll go down to York an' wait till she comes, then we'll be married an' go straight to the cottage. Everything is ready an' neat now, the lamps all filled an' the stove new blacked, an' there's potatoes washed for the pot an' a new broom behind the door. I was minded to stay overnight an' tidy the yard a bit tomorrow, but the storm an' what seemed a gun off to sea brought me

several times back and forth among them before he found the object of his search, a group of crouching figures almost in arm's reach of the scooter whom he had already passed twice without seeing.

"Two of ye get in here," he shouted hoarsely above the roar of the storm.



THE GIRL GAVE A SUDDEN START.

"Women or children first, an' quick! I'll come back for the others. I can't help, for I'm froze to the boat."

"There's only four of us," came back a clear voice, "and I'm the only woman. Take two of the men first. They're not so strong."

"No, you an' one man," sharply. "Quick! I'll come back for the others."

"That's right," commanded a voice from the group. "I couldn't crowd ahead of the girl, even if she is the strongest an' bravest among us."

Not until they were sweeping back toward the shore, with the wind now, and he heard the girl's voice speaking

encouragingly to the feeble old man she was supporting, did Bernard recognize his passenger. But he had no time to make himself known, or even to speak. A scooter rarely carries more than two, even in fair weather, and on a night like this there could not be an instant's relaxation of vigilance.

When finally they slid up on the beach there were twenty or more men waiting, gathered from along the shore, all peering grimly, but without exception, into the darkness.

"Here, help these two out quick!" mumbled Bernard through swollen lips. Then as twenty pairs of eager hands obeyed, "Look after the girl. It's Norah."

The girl gave a sudden start. She had not recognized him before, but already he had thrown out his pole and swung the scooter round upon the ice and into the wind. As she sprang toward him he slipped back into the darkness.

He was gone longer this time, and when he returned one of the passengers was unconscious. Norah was waiting, enveloped in a surfman's pea jacket and rubber coat. They had to cut Bernard loose with a hatchet.

He did not go to New York at all. The life saving men would not permit it. As soon as he could get out a delegation of them went for a priest, and the marriage took place in the station house with everybody dressed in storm costumes. Then, the weather being fair and the wind good, the whole force escorted them across the bay in scooters.

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